



**OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY**

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
WASHINGTON, DC

**18 MAY 1997**

**MEMORANDUM FOR ALMAJCOM-FOA-DRU (CONTRACTING)**

**FROM: SAF/AQC**  
1060 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington DC 20330-1060

**SUBJECT: Use of "Desired Enhancements" in Requests for Proposals**

The purpose of this memorandum is to bring to your attention an issue raised in two recent protests that impacts how we write our RFPs containing statements of objectives in "best value" source selections. The RFPs in both cases identified "desired enhancements" in addition to minimum mandatory requirements. However, the RFPs did not specifically state how proposals that either exceeded the listed "desired enhancements" or that offered additional enhancements would be evaluated. Both of the winning offerors met the minimum mandatory requirements and proposed many of the specific "desired enhancements" of the solicitation. However, the winning offerors also proposed additional enhancements beyond those specifically identified in the RFP as "desired enhancements". The additional enhancements were evaluated as providing significant additional capability. As a result, the winning offerors were given credit (as strengths in the technical area) for exceeding the stated "desired enhancements" and for proposing features not identified as mandatory requirements or "desired enhancements." The protesters argued that, by stating minimum technical requirements as well as "desired enhancements" in the RFP, the Air Force was precluded from evaluating favorably any improvements other than those specifically identified as "desired enhancements". The protesters believed that giving the winning offerors credit for exceeding the "desired enhancements" was in effect using unstated evaluation criteria in the source selections. Although both protests were settled prior to a formal decision, the GAO appears to be receptive to this argument.

The bottom line from these two protests is that the practice of using "desired enhancements" in an RFP, in addition to minimum requirements, is not a problem. However, if "desires" are used in an RFP, the RFP must clearly communicate to the offerors how, if at all, exceeding such characteristics will be evaluated (i.e., whether or not credit will be given in the evaluation). The RFP should also state whether offerors may be given credit in the evaluation for proposing beneficial enhancements other than those described as mandatory requirements or "desired enhancements." The user must evaluate whether or not exceeding "desired enhancements" has value and the program team must decide how enhancements other than those identified will be evaluated in the source selection. Section M of the RFP should then be drafted to explicitly reflect the government's intent in this regard. Although each RFP must be tailored to reflect the specific requirements of a particular acquisition, section M of the RFP should reflect one of three alternatives:

- Identify the required minimums but not any "desired enhancements" and inform offerors that any

• Identify the required minimums but not any "desired enhancements" and not any "desired minimums".

70-41 Atch 98-2D (AFFARS App AA, para aa-204(2), App BB, para 203(b)(2) and FAR 15.605(d) by circle Post to AFFARS App AA, para AA-204(2), App BB, para 203(b)(2) and FAR 15.605(d) by circle the references and noting in the margin: "See 70-41, Atch 98-2D filed at FAR 15. Then file the atch behind the sups to FAR 15.

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features or technical offerings that enhance the system will be considered in the best value determination.

- Identify both required minimums and "desired enhancements" and explicitly state that the Air Force reserves the right to evaluate and give evaluation credit for proposed features that are either in addition to the stated required minimums and "desired enhancements" or that exceed the stated "desired enhancements."
- Identify both the required minimums and "desired enhancements" and explicitly state that offerors will not be given credit for any enhancements beyond those identified.

Our preference is that the first two alternatives be used most frequently and the third alternative be only rarely used. The key to avoiding this potential problem is to be very clear in the language of Section M so that there is no confusion about how offeror's proposals will be evaluated.

/signed/

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